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THE ART OF CANDIDATING

THE ART OF CANDIDATING

A HAND-BOOK OF
THE MINISTER'S PART IN ESTABLISHING
THE PASTORAL RELATION

By Horace Worth
||

BOSTON
HORACE WORTH

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I

Introduction

THE desire for a change of pastorate is the fact from which this treatise starts, upon the proper behavior before which it would throw light. The writer has several times been through the experience, and has found the way of success so different from the ways he so long tried in vain, and with much agony of spirit, that he ventures to study the matter in the light of the successes and failures of many besides, and to give forth the knowledge to others. There are those who lack no qualification for the high place they would serve in, save that they know not the difficult art of candidating.

That many ministers have qualifications for service greater than they are able to negotiate in a candidating campaign might easily be proved. The qualifications of a good candidate

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are not strictly the same as the qualifications of a successful pastor and teacher. For instance, the very knowledge of how to gain a hearing before a church's committee, or before a congregation, is not knowledge of the pastoral calling; and inability to make a good first impression, so fatal in candidating, may be no hindrance, after acquaintance, to the best ministerial work. One can hardly be persuaded that failure to get a desired call necessarily means inability to do successful work. One knows too many instances otherwise. On the contrary, everyone is likely to know men who, by a candidating ability, have place beyond what they deserve. That we do not always get what we deserve is one of the limitations of life—often even to the minister the overwhelming problem of faith. Some would counsel grace to bear it as inevitable; and it is a rock of stumbling to some who cannot themselves bear the injustice they counsel others to bear. The author belongs to the yet other class who believe we can have very nearly what we will pay the price of—in this case, doubtless, a knowledge of the ways and means of candidating.

We are fairly committed to the method of candidating, which, though open to grave criticism—it confuses candidating ability with pastoral qualifications, and only in general gives churches and ministers their due—is yet, doubtless, the best that has been devised. At any rate, we are under it, and are likely to be, and the object of this treatise is to show how one may best conduct himself in view of it. To show the defects of the method is work for him who has improvements to offer. The danger is that some one will make his candidating ability the measure of his qualification for ministerial work, and, from failure to be exalted, will feebly try to serve, which is the way to death.

II

Pastoral Changes

BECAUSE of the discontent of some of his people with his ministry, a pastor may have the necessity of changing his place of service laid upon him. There would seem to be but one way out of this situation. In the threat of this circumstance, it is doubtless best that he take time by the forelock and be beforehand with his resignation. If he should wish to continue in the place, he can hardly hope to stem the tide of opposition for long, and his popularity and his usefulness are now on the wane. And the defection rapidly grows, as by his strong desire to stay he manifests his lack of faith in his ability to do as well elsewhere—a damaging give-away. The church in its action is at the mercy of any few insisting ones in it; no one feels that the sympathy or the help of any can be lost, so that even the friends

of the pastor advise his resignation. To delay resigning is to risk the unpardonable offense of dividing the feeling of the congregation, and gives time for the spreading abroad of the fact that there is opposition. And since the truth concerning this is seldom got right by the papers, or by common report, the minister is much damaged in his effort to gain the interest of the supply committee of another church.

On the other hand, to resign his office promptly in the presence of an incipient discontent among the people enhances the minister's position. It shows his own faith in his qualifications, which faith, by creating in others the same confidence, often means his recall; and arousing thus the protest of the people, creates that good asset, in view of a change—their assured confidence in his ministry. This is, of course, a good thing to be able to show to an inquiring committee. Prompt action in resigning a pastorate keeps the matter on the plane of self-respect and independence. It does not think of the place as something to be grasped at or clung to, and so calls out admiration—a good asset. The distressing experience of some

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churches leads them to inquire, not only if a man can be had, but if, on occasion, he can be got rid of, and for a man to have clung to his place, or to have raised bad odor, is to them a grave disqualification. They prefer a man who is independent, and of finer spirit, as we all do. The writer knows of a committee, who, upon further looking up a man on the eve of extending a call, fell in, during a visit of inquiry to his former parish, with those who were disgusted with the way he had hung on, and now mentioned the circumstance. The committee were taken aback, and were inclined to revise their judgment. Even these parishioners would have had a good word to say for their former pastor had he played the man, for which action they and the inquiring committee would have been compelled to have admiration.

And people are apt to estimate our qualifications much as we ourselves do. Therefore, for one to show confidence in one's ability to command as good a place—which is the logic of a prompt resignation—is to give that confidence to others. It is heroic action for a man thus to burn the bridge behind him, but more times than

not it is his salvation. It is always one's salvation when it is in the interest of the right, or that higher degree of right which we know as Christian action.

There are other reasons for the wish to change one's pastorate that are almost as imperative as the demand of some of the people. The wish of a minister for a larger opportunity surely is not illegitimate—one owes it to the world to make his life count for the most. It is a most holy desire, though it is doubtless often held mixed with some dross. In this day, when power is so largely represented by money—we can get scarcely anything done without it—one's opportunity for service is largely by his chance to minister to the cultured and the influential, i. e., the leaders of men, and touching these sources of power to turn them into consecrated ways. Thus to work among many men and of large influence and power is a great opportunity. Thus the salary received very nearly measures the value and worth of one's service. Men are apt to be paid relatively to what their service is worth. But it is oftenest the opportunity to serve, and not the salary, that attracts

men to the larger fields. Similarly in other tasks, it is the sense of attainment and excellence that most appeals—a fact that relieves the materialism of the day of its apparent grossness. It is not that he may get so many fish for the table that attracts the fisherman, but that he may be the kind of man that can catch fish. This feeling is the redemption of sportsmanship, and no less of the industrial order.

I am not disposed to insist upon this point. It is clear in my own mind, and the general feeling of the clergy upon it can hardly be wholly wrong. It is always dangerous to bring an indictment against an entire class, and the fact is clear that ministers seek promotion. But in general this is wholesome. When one has been promoted to a field of influence and wealth and culture and power, and to an appropriate salary, the fitting has come to pass. The desire of pastors for an opportunity to do large service is first—a holy desire, which, like a gracious brooding, is over us. Materialism is not the strongest note of our life. The higher goods, as has often been observed, have almost invariably been attached to the lower.

The proper completion of a holy and useful life is honor and place and material reward. When happiness does not follow goodness, nor exaltation humility, nor place the fitness for it, the unfitting and not the fitting has come to pass. One must not for a moment believe that the two do not go together, nor cease to strive to make the two go together.

A pastor may not be opposed, his work may prosper, yet there be good reasons why he should want to make a change. The place he is in may not call out his highest nor his peculiar powers. He may be better adapted to the work required in another place—perhaps with people of a different type. Or the salary he is receiving may be quite insufficient for his growing family, to provide for which is his first duty, if he would not prove himself to be worse than an infidel. There are considerations of health, and of the social and educational needs of his family. Or there may be simply the conviction that his usefulness would be greater in a new field. He has marred this one by some mistake in method or policy; or he is ready for greater problems and tasks; or he has done for this

people what is in his power—and however his conviction is founded, he cannot be at ease until he has his heart's desire, and has pitched his tent by some other stream of life.

And a call may come wholly unsolicited by him, inviting him to share elsewhere the rich treasure that has kept his people loyal to him for years. Surely, when such call to a field of larger influence and service comes unsought, he may seriously consider if he should not refer it to God. And God seldom does good things for us in spite of our lack of effort—usually in and through our effort. This is the vindication of many a well-founded purpose, and of much active effort, to make a change.

And this law of economy demands that, when a pastor sets about to make a change, he will not take anything that offers, as if chance would crown him without his stir—a doctrine we disallow in every theory of will—or as if God is in the first opportunity more than in the second. It demands that he seek his place, use his powers and his judgment as to his fitness for an offered place. We are not more exempt from the application of intelligence and economy in the King-

dom of God than we are in business, where their use is fully honored. We do not *fall into* our places—a term we use of sin. God's call is not in spite of our wills or our efforts, but in and through them, as our salvation is.

Effort to secure an enlarged place for service by men in the ministry, so often frowned upon, is sanctified by its survival in business, and by its attendant efficient service. One cannot see that the desire and effort for place hinder effective service there. Yet even there the motive determines much, as in the finer forms of ministry it determines everything. The self-seeker defeats himself everywhere—nowhere as in the ministry. Who would calculatingly save his life simply loses it. It is generous abandon, or venture to the highest, that saves life. The way to miss place, as happiness or wealth, is to seek it first. But the motive of an opportunity for larger service sanctifies and saves. Where this motive is present, the effort for a larger field of usefulness, or the effort for a chance to fully exercise one's powers, is holy.

This essential truth, that an unworthy motive surely defeats life, some men in the ministry—

let it be said with regret—have yet to learn. Surely they have fallen away from that faith in which they once committed themselves to the life of poverty and shame as heralds of Christ. It is enough if a disciple of Christ gets a living by his work—let him not try to make it a way to gain. The suspicion of there being unworthy motives and only moderate consecration—the lack of any great distance between the leader and the people who are seeking spiritual guidance from him—this, more than anything else, is the cause of the Church's languor in these days. What a case one who knows many ministers could make out against some of them, in the light of Christ's demand for sacrifice and humility for the love of God. Wholesome advice is needed by some, and a conscientious examination by them of the sand upon which they are building. What indeed does it profit a man if he gain a large place, and, because he puts place first, and not the enthusiasm to serve, he lose the very goodness of life! Besides, he knows nothing of life who has not learned that in gaining the *Life*, one gains all things besides—the holier the life the higher the place one is called

to serve in. This is the normal and natural thing; all else is out of the just order. This general fact is the preacher's message; faith in it is the real witness to God and the real fellowship with God. But what if the message and the life be riven apart!

A strong and general interest by ministers in the pastoral changes that take place must be confessed. Should two ministers of acquaintance meet, the topic of certain vacant pulpits would as likely as not come up before they part. That much such information is gained by those secretaries much among ministers, and the place given such information in the Church News of denominational papers, reflect the interest. I have known men whose habit it was, upon receiving their denominational paper, to turn first to the news of calls and resignations, not perhaps so much with a view to securing a chance to make a change, as from the wish to know who were changing. Yet one cannot but feel that many men are ever ready for a change of advantage should opportunity favor. The average pastorate, for many reasons, is short. Men do not accept a call expecting to stay, and plan

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nothing beyond a few years. And churches are as restless as ministers. They do not call a man expecting to keep him, and are apt to regard a change of pastor a cure for any kind of languor.

There may be gains in this uneasiness—there surely are losses. The immediateness with which all work is done, and the narrow horizon that bounds all plan and effort, are disastrous. Interest is likely to be shifted from the permanent building up of men to the bringing them “to take a stand” where they can be counted, and be shown as proof of successful ministry. This is the weakness of the limited term, or the itinerant system, as applied to the pastoral office—something must be done that can be counted and shown. The emphasis is apt to be shifted from what is unseen and eternal to what is visible and apparent. In general, emphasis upon the number of accessions to a church, instead of emphasis upon the quality of accessions, is pernicious. The feeling that one must by all means do something to make his office secure, or the wish to do what will open the door to another pastorate, fosters the number habit.

Where a pastor is constantly under the necessity of vindicating himself by tangible results, in order to keep his place, or needs to show work accomplished that he may be promoted, the temptation is to do superficial or showy work. Why will not churches learn to remove this restraint from a man, under which freedom, and in the confidence in his ability to build broadly, alone can a minister do really substantial and successful work?

Young ministers ought to learn the goodness of the small field, and large churches ought not forbear to look to small fields for men. Those who have wrought faithfully there are well fitted to lead in greater enterprises. As to the first, the conditions favor continued study and careful preparation, without which one's sun may not far rise, whatever its promise. And there are in the small field as really hard problems to be solved. Such a course will bring a man's talent, in the maturity of his years, to solid attainment, which talent in another case may run a merely meteoric course. As to the second, it may be we all have known men who would not accept a small field to begin with, because large churches

reason that the importance of the church he serves gives the measure of the pastor's talent, so that not only the first of one's ministry, but the entire course of it, is determined by the level at which it begins. In many cases churches do so reason, but the logic is without foundation. A man who has been apprenticed in a small field, with time for study and careful preparation, has a better foundation and has followed a wiser course than he who has spent the same time in a larger church where much less time can be given to these important things, and where even blossoming genius may fail of abundant fruit. Many a man who started high has had, for this reason, in time, to rest upon his place or upon his friends, rather than upon his real qualifications; and it may be his sun has gone quite down, which once shone so brightly. Let men be wise in this matter, and not try to climb too fast, but always to rest upon real qualification. On the other hand, let no good man fail because he measures himself by the smallness of his place; let him insist upon serving to the full measure of his power.

III

The School of Candidating

THE necessity of a change of pastorate, though the change be made through the narrow door of candidating, may be, as many a man has afterwards found, a kind dispensation. Mr. Babcock somewhere speaks of "friend necessity." Such a change may be good for the church. It may bring about a supplementing one style of ministry by another style, bring in various methods of work, and cover the whole ground—for our congregations are made up of people of different temperaments and tastes and appreciations and views. And it may be a good thing for a minister that his nest be broken up, and in the test of candidating he be put under the necessity of making his preaching really effective. He enters the arena with others, and verdict is to be given him on the basis of what he can effect. I know of a

preacher who broke away from the use of manuscript because he could not get a call by using it, and of another who changed the whole content of his preaching because he discovered, under this test, that he was missing the mark, and of yet another who broke himself of a mannerism and of a distressing style of delivery, giving himself to six months' severe training as the price of deliverance from bondage. I know a score of men to whom the best thing that could happen is that they be thrown out of their pastorates—then they would have to judge their work by what it can effect. They might not wholly adapt themselves to the need, but the experience would much improve and help them. It is conceivable that in his preaching a man may be quite missing the mark, and nothing would be so good for him as to be under the necessity of persuading some church of his efficiency.

The man who every five or six years is a candidate has to keep in touch with vital and effective things in order to keep his rank. He does not pass the dead line. He keeps up with the demand of congregations, and is constantly bringing his work to the test of worth. He will

be compelled to work, and to be even severe with himself, and that necessity, though a hard master, is at the same time the best of friends. It is the curse of life to have it easy, and ease, be it known, is the denial and not the proof of love. He who would advance ought to rejoice when the necessity comes that demands of him to change his place.

And the brave man will not hesitate voluntarily to burn a bridge behind him, nor fear to trust his resources and powers in the face of the task of qualifying for a greater work, or of giving proof of his qualification for a greater work. It is a hard school, but to the brave man it is a good school, simply for that reason. I have known men to delight in candidating, but they were men who had confidence in their powers, and had learned by candidating experience what things are valued, and how good it is for men to strive. They rejoiced in it as a strong man rejoices to run a race. One of the hardest experiences the writer has had was once to be thrown out of his pastorate, but it was verily one of the kindest of providences. Let men who are in earnest rejoice when they fall

into this tribulation, and let other earnest men not hesitate voluntarily to take up the yoke.

For the most part men shrink from a change of pastorate rather than court a change. Probably three out of five resignations are due to some pressure from without. Unquestionably, there is unrest; the churches are uneasy, and there is no disguising that there are ministers who are ambitious for the places of honor, who have not learned the lesson of the lowly place. Yet I am convinced that in the main pastors are content to serve in the places to which they have been called. For candidating—that narrow way to another field—is full of anguish. And it has grave dangers. In the shifting, one may be degraded to a lower place, with the attending loss of self-approval and salary and usefulness. There is ever the feeling that somehow the change will come, or ought to come, without its being sought. And in order to make a change it is not uncommonly necessary for one himself to take the lead in the matter, and to pull wires, and to resort to the ways men of fine feeling hesitate to walk in—there is enough to make the whole thing dis-

tasteful to one at all finely organized or purposed. One is apt to come out of a year's candidating with a certain loss of self-respect. The ethics of candidating, if strong light were thrown upon it, would call for penitence. I will not discuss this. Some day a candidate will write his confessions and tell how he worked for the place he got and for places he did not get; how he would have preferred that the place seek him, according to his ideal of the sacred office; how he kept committees from knowing that he had asked his friends to write in his behalf—giving the impression that their writing was voluntary—and why he preached as well as he did when the church heard him. I am not saying that the things implied are wrong, nor any one of them. *Wrong* is a very elastic term—there are so many degrees of it. I am saying simply that these things are not in accord with the finest sense or feeling. Candidating is disagreeable and may involve a loss of the finest feeling or honor. Most of us would rather not have it to do. The ethics of it are far ahead of business ethics; that is, ordinary ethics. But the messenger of God does not deal with the

ordinary; if he did he would have no message, nor superior life. He calls men to the standard of Christ. Can he himself do less than live by it?

Many readers of this know how disagreeable it is for one to ask one's friends to speak or write in one's behalf. It puts a heavy tax on friendship. Sometimes it has led men to ask favors of those who were not really their friends. Then come humbling refusals as a result of the overreaching enthusiasm to get on. Or there results lukewarm praise, which is worse than a refusal to help.

And preaching on trial, and being judged all round—this expression, this move, one's appearance, age, the phase of truth one declares—and the making the form or technique to assume first place rather than the good to be wrought, distorts the emphasis, as all candidates feel—ugh! it takes a self-reliant and brazen man to welcome the experience.

Thus the disagreeableness involved in effecting a change often makes a pastor content to serve where he is. Now this content may be his worst enemy. But it is an enemy to be met

and overcome. Thus is created the candidate's dilemma; it is less than best for him to stay where he is; at the same time it is hard to go.

But it is well to welcome the experience as opening wide doors. For instance, until one has learned to be self-possessed under the ordeal of a trial sermon, a preacher cannot have the necessary confidence and self-possession for effective preaching. He has found no real message; his thought is still on technique and form. He has still an unholy mastery of his art. Form and manner are not everything, but they are indeed important, and wait for their power upon freedom.

Speaking for himself, the writer can say that a year's candidating—one of the most trying years he has lived—was better than any year's schooling. He found his message; and he had taught him a good lesson concerning the way to life—that it is narrow. He learned to be self-possessed and free before any congregation, however critical, which is at heart a matter of confidence, and he ceased to be provincial in other matters as really important. At last, too, he had measurably learned the kind

of preaching men are moved by. He came to have no fear lest he should do the wrong thing, and with this confidence he did his best. I followed, for instance, so many strange orders of worship, that I venture there is none I cannot follow accurately and with freedom. And I have known other men in like manner to be delivered by a year's candidating.

A great blessing has thus been offered the man who has to candidate, or who will do so voluntarily. If he is in earnest, and has this faith, that, in the event, he is under a good Providence, and meets it with courage and not with despair, he is on the way to life and power.

IV

Resigning a Pastorate

ALL things considered, I believe that, in securing a call, the man who has given up his pastorate before he makes effort for another is at an advantage. This, to be sure, is contrary to common opinion and advice, which indicate that in securing the interest and attention of the committee of a church, the obscurest pastorate is better than none. The reasoning is, that a minister's being without a pastorate seems to imply that he was compelled to leave his last place, and not having yet a call after the expiration of the customary few months between resignation and dismissal, that he has already failed before several churches. If it be necessary that this impression prevail, then none would dissent from the common advice.

There is, however, no need that a false impression prevail. And by one's taking prompt

action in resigning when trouble threatens—this, of course, does not apply to other cases—unfavorable action is forestalled, a distinct advantage is gained, and attractive qualifications are shown.

In the first place, if a man is without charge, his friends will feel the imperative need of promptly doing something for him—more than they would if he were in a pastorate, in which case they feel he ought to be content, or even if they know there is opposition, may feel that his own efforts to get away will succeed before the break really comes. For a pastor to give up work during the time when his interest and energy are given to securing another field is more honorable and more fair to the church—a point in his favor, as showing him a just man. This fairness and honor, if shown in other things, will make a good illustration of the type of man he is, which trait, if brought to the attention of a supply committee, would make a strong appeal to them. A candidate without a pulpit can be absent any number of Sundays and no work will suffer; and by preaching elsewhere can learn what sermons appeal to congre-

gations other than his own congregation. He can preach his best sermons, as churches expect, if he can preach elsewhere than in his own pulpit, where he must preach good or ill, as it may happen, and under the circumstances likely to be less than his best. And unfavorable action of the church can be anticipated by his promptly resigning, and thus the fact of the dissatisfaction of the few be turned into regret at his action on the part of the many. The danger is that a pastor will delay his resignation until the dissatisfaction becomes chronic and general, and in that case commonly known, which counts greatly against him in seeking to interest a committee, and in seeking to interest those whom he would have recommend him to a committee. And thus great chances are lost.

This spirit of independence and of high honor I am counseling will commend one to a committee mightily. On the other hand, a committee will be slow to consider a man who has hung on and has had to be cut loose, to the embarrassment of the church. They are apt to consider not only if they can get a man, but if they can get rid of him should the necessity come. Above

all, it shows a man's confidence in his qualifications, that he can get as good a place—a most important consideration; and that whatever happens, he is above hanging on—a thing that disgusts and detracts, and quickly increases the opposition. And so far as the fact that he is without a pastorate would argue that he was put out, the facts in the case would be a most telling thing for some friend to write, instead of the glittering generalities that so often strike nowhere. I propose the question to the reader: Were you a member of a committee to choose candidates, or to recommend a pastor, would you not be drawn to such a man? Would not his prompt action in resigning when no other place offered argue a confidence in his qualifications that would appeal to you?

There are disadvantages in thus letting go before something is laid hold of. A man may not be able to support his family without a regular income for long, and may thus by the force of necessity accept a less place than he has had, or than he ought. And being without a pastorate, he may more easily give way to discouragement under the circumstance of need,

or of repeated failure. And if he is without a pastorate, especially if for some length of time, he may have to withstand the implied insistence of friends that he is not fitted for the grade of place he wants, and to refuse the advice that he take some place or other that he can get. Usually, however, the man who believes in his qualifications, and perseveres in candidating—that most excellent school—for a year, or even more, will find some church that will believe in him. The cases of men who have been rejected by even many churches, who yet did not lose heart, and were at last discovered by some church of independent judgment, to whom it was no disqualification of a man that some other church had rejected him, are full of interest for study. The list would without question include a more than average number of the now strong men. And it is more than likely that their experience in candidating, materially increased their power.

With these indicated places of danger guarded, promptly to cut loose from a pastorate means the gaining of an advantage.

V

Qualities of a Good Candidate

ALARGE variety of gifts and accomplishments aids the candidate for pastoral office in securing the interest of a committee and a call. What are here set down must be understood as suggesting only in general their primacy and character.

And first I feel must be mentioned an indifference to mere candidating qualifications. Doubtless, we all know men who are all the time adding to their candidating assets; who seem never to have the event of a change of pastorate out of mind. They are forever getting into the papers. They painted their church; they raised their debt; they are to supply Dr. Prophet's pulpit; they spoke at such a meeting; they had so many accessions to the membership of their church; their current expenses were increased by so much; they contributed an article to the

denominational paper; they wrote a book; they traveled or studied abroad; their people gave them a purse at Christmas. I sometimes have the suspicion they so far overreach as to write these items for papers themselves. We never quite get rid of the feeling that by their friendliness they are courting our favor because they may want to use us, as they in time come to try to do. Their friendship is of that calculating, selfish sort, as their work is, that robs it of its essence. It never seems enough that they should do a service, but only that men should know it. They have their eye on what their work will do for them; how much it will help them when the time comes; who would not do the work were it not that they need it to show; whose enslavement is to the columns of the Year-book.

It is a suicidal policy. The real motive almost always shows. Besides, it vitiates the work. No true work, in so fine a region as the prophetic office, can be done from any but the purest and least calculating of motives—a truth quite fundamental in life, as has already in another connection been pointed out. Any

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false or inferior motive quite poisons the spring. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

This truth, deemed so essential, and lying so close to the heart of the preacher's message, we shall have occasion again to refer to and to vindicate. One must do the work for itself if one would do it well. The moment calculation of gain comes in where generous abandon of consequences ought to be, the life is lost, and the very thing striven for is failed of. To do the work is before gaining the place, and he gains the place who is indifferent to gaining it and committed to the work. The Life comes before the qualifications for place, and the greatest qualification for place is, without doubt, a superior life.

The paradox is, that the way to miss the place is to seek it first, putting seeming above fact, and appearance above actuality—doing for the sake of a showing what can really be done only with abandon and for the love of God; what the left hand ought not to know. For instance, the way to be without friends is to make friends for the sake of using them; the detestable trick almost always gives itself away. The first quali-

fication or asset is faith in the highest things and in the purest motives—the gospel the minister of Christ declares, which he cannot really declare if he does not really believe to the degree of doing it as the first business of life. A man committed to this faith with the apostolic enthusiasm has command of ample resources; he is the prince of candidates. Only he who is indifferent to making a showing does what is really worth while. Count Zinzendorf lifts the truth to a general law when he says, “Only he to whom worldly things are indifferent becomes their master.”

By this principle the ministry is being tried in our day, and in the light of it one understands why there is the unmistakable feeling against men's seeking for place. The day has not come, but there are those who feel that the day will come, when it will be deemed more honorable for a man to seek a pastorate because his people are dissatisfied than because he is.

The positive side of this is to increase one's ministerial qualifications rather than one's candidating qualifications, and the greatest qualification is the having a really superior and ex-

V

Qualities of a Good Candidate

A LARGE variety of gifts and accomplishments aids the candidate for pastoral office in securing the interest of a committee and a call. What are here set down must be understood as suggesting only in general their primacy and character.

And first I feel must be mentioned an indifference to mere candidating qualifications. Doubtless, we all know men who are all the time adding to their candidating assets; who seem never to have the event of a change of pastorate out of mind. They are forever getting into the papers. They painted their church; they raised their debt; they are to supply Dr. Prophet's pulpit; they spoke at such a meeting; they had so many accessions to the membership of their church; their current expenses were increased by so much; they contributed an article to the

denominational paper; they wrote a book; they traveled or studied abroad; their people gave them a purse at Christmas. I sometimes have the suspicion they so far overreach as to write these items for papers themselves. We never quite get rid of the feeling that by their friendliness they are courting our favor because they may want to use us, as they in time come to try to do. Their friendship is of that calculating, selfish sort, as their work is, that robs it of its essence. It never seems enough that they should do a service, but only that men should know it. They have their eye on what their work will do for them; how much it will help them when the time comes; who would not do the work were it not that they need it to show; whose enslavement is to the columns of the Year-book.

It is a suicidal policy. The real motive almost always shows. Besides, it vitiates the work. No true work, in so fine a region as the

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false or inferior motive quite poisons the spring. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

This truth, deemed so essential, and lying so close to the heart of the preacher's message, we shall have occasion again to refer to and to vindicate. One must do the work for itself if one would do it well. The moment calculation of gain comes in where generous abandon of consequences ought to be, the life is lost, and the very thing striven for is failed of. To do the work is before gaining the place, and he gains the place who is indifferent to gaining it and committed to the work. The Life comes before the qualifications for place, and the greatest qualification for place is, without doubt, a superior life.

The paradox is, that the way to miss the place is to seek it first, putting seeming above fact, and appearance above actuality—doing for the sake of a showing what can really be done only with abandon and for the love of God; what the left hand ought not to know. For instance, the way to be without friends is to make friends for the sake of using them; the detestable trick almost always gives itself away. The first quali-

fication or asset is faith in the highest things and in the purest motives—the gospel the minister of Christ declares, which he cannot really declare if he does not really believe to the degree of doing it as the first business of life. A man committed to this faith with the apostolic enthusiasm has command of ample resources; he is the prince of candidates. Only he who is indifferent to making a showing does what is really worth while. Count Zinzendorf lifts the truth to a general law when he says, “Only he to whom worldly things are indifferent becomes their master.”

By this principle the ministry is being tried in our day, and in the light of it one understands why there is the unmistakable feeling against men’s seeking for place. The day has not come, but there are those who feel that the day will come, when it will be deemed more honorable for a man to seek a pastorate because his people are dissatisfied than because he is.

The positive side of this is to increase one’s ministerial qualifications rather than one’s candidating qualifications, and the greatest qualification is the having a really superior and ex-

alted life. Religious faith is to-day being sorely tried by its comparative little advantage, and vast sections of life are already lost to the Church. The indifference of so many men to spiritual things has forced upon us who are called to serve at the altar of sacrifice, the suspicion that we have followed the Master afar off, and have grown cold concerning the good news that in other days compelled men to death to declare it. The call to us is to reveal and to lay bare those higher powers which express God, and to make them real in our lives. Until men are shown that in us is a superior and masterful life, better than the common life they know, and godliness be manifest as profitable for all things, religion will not be a reality for men's consideration and allegiance. Until then the minister of Christ will not have honor. On the other hand, the day a man lays bare the goodness of God and the superior life of the spirit, and comes to declare the good news of it, he will be exalted. For men are athirst for better things, but they do not know that they are real. Behind all real ministry for God is the witness of the life.

The minister is first a herald of a certain fact, or good news. Has he a message to declare that is effective in bringing men to high ideals and to hearty endeavor, and thus to noble, worthful living? Churches make this the test of the men they consider—they hear them preach. The candidate brings no sample of his other qualifications, but concerning his message churches are more particular to ask. A candidate is in competition with preachers or heralds. If he fail here, he fails at the crucial place. And if he cannot come recommended as a preacher of some ability, the church will hardly seriously consider him. He must have some exceptional qualification to offset this lack in the really important place. The preacher is a herald of the goodness or grace of God. Some churches did put administration first in days of institutionalism, but since the failure of that method of regeneration few make the mistake. The institutional programme owes its success to an inspiring person who declares and lives the faith. Dissociated from this it has proved a dismal failure.

The highest qualification of a preacher is to

have a message from God to the weary, longing heart of man. His effective ministry waits for the declaring this good news, and this vindication of God in the energy and ongoing and resources and disposition of the world. The Church calls to-day for men with a message. She waits for men with a superior life to live, and a burning faith to declare—for men with a life that will so exceed the common life that it will put to shame all that is of mere prudence and calculation, and give hope for despair. She knows what she wants, and is ready to honor the herald.

We forgive and overlook a hundred defects if a man has a message. Homeliness, awkwardness, age, that he is not married, that he has a large family, and what not, all give way before the one important thing—the man speaks for God. He makes life good and the way luminous. Without this a man may bring personal charm, culture, gifts of administration, and many other kinds—they do not commend him. Preaching is not a matter of the old theology, nor of the new theology; it is not a question of a written nor of an extempore sermon. It is deeper than

these. It is the question of a message declared and a life lived. The real preacher's witness is to the certainty that there are higher powers, and that they are for us and seek our good. And he makes the truth real to us. Behind the message is a life, so exceeding the common life that it is a living message from God. If one have that, other things will be presupposed—psychology of teaching, common sense in administration, initiative and resource and energy in work; interest in common affairs, and a practical human sympathy; and, of course, that fine feeling of humility which gives charm to personal life.

Brethren, it is ours to bear witness to a superior life, which is the harmony of all things and the mastery over all evils, whose goodness and peace pass understanding. It is the very life of God. It exceeds all other good. I know of a man who, after he had been several years in the ministry, was offered a salary of five thousand dollars to take up work in a wholly honorable business enterprise, who refused the offer, to continue in the ministry at fifteen hundred dollars. It measures his belief in his calling

and in the life he declares as superior. Such a man values his service and has a message. And his life is the witness, laying hold upon men to rebuke their vanity and to compel faith in God.

And the gospel that is valued is a gospel for to-day; that is, a messenger relative to the thought and questions and needs of to-day; and stated not in the language of the first century, nor of the fourth century, nor of the sixteenth, but of to-day, a vital and ethical rather than a judicial and declarative salvation. Godliness is profitable for life, as well as for death; good for all things, and always good. And the thought must be positive and constructive—an attack against yesterday is a poor substitute for an enthusiasm for to-day.

In reference to this important qualification something more is said under the title *Candidating Sermons*.

Given the message, it is important that it be presented in a becoming and forceful manner. I have known a committee to refuse to hear a man because they had become prejudiced against him by what they learned of his pulpit manner. Now a defect here may but compromise and lessen

one's ministerial efficiency, but in gaining a call it is an all but absolute barrier. A congregation will in time get used to many a peculiarity in the manner of their preacher, but when people hear a man for the first time, they are distracted and repelled by defective manner. The cost of a cure is often great, but the earnest man will not hesitate. An attractive manner is a part of the preacher's equipment—a candidate can do but little without it.

For the most part churches highly value the capacity of a pastor to make friends—the ability to win the esteem of men, and to set men at worthful work. Men in this instance preach not by a sermon but by the attractiveness and charm of their life. The man who avoids men, or whom men avoid, and especially young men, has lost a key to influence and power. Men are attracted to the church in which there is enthusiasm, and the basis of enthusiasm is a personality that attracts. The hero gives out a constraining charm. To nobly live the faith in the common relations and occasions and duties of life is to confess among men the Christ in whom one believes. A man is much valued who will make friends with

the large number outside the church and congregation, and enlist their interest in the work of the church. His public spirit leads him to value the common affairs of life and to purify and dignify them by his service. This is somehow the pledge that he takes a practical and human view of things and makes religion an integral part of life. He is in the thick of the order where men pour forth their interest and their endeavors, and he becomes a guide to them in their ways. He is not lifted above human concerns in an adoration of the divine, making a gulf men cannot cross, and laying upon religion the curse of the unreal. The occasion of the Master's fierce wrath against the constituted religion of His day was exactly this—the humanity was taken out of divine things.

Ability to command the influence and service of many friends is a valuable asset in gaining the interest of committees on pastor. This ability, of course, rests upon the foundation of merit, though I have often wondered whether a man's having the personal regard of a friend and that friend's being disposed to serve him do not go as far as more personal qualifications. I recall

that the men I have befriended have been the men I have known best and not the men who, of all available, have been the best qualified. If I was to aid anyone at all, it had to be one I knew. And I helped those I did because they were my friends. Of course I believed in them: that is the nature of friendship. That is why father favors son—he sees his qualifications—that is the nature of fatherhood. Love is the true assessor. In recommending to his committee men for vacation supply, a pastor is apt to consult the desire to help a friend, above the superior qualification of one not personally known to him. Yet he may be sure that the latter would render a better service. Of two men alike qualified, he has the advantage who has friends who know his qualifications and are disposed to help him.

High social standing is an immense advantage to the candidate. We all somehow feel the superiority of a man of culture and good breeding, and have a way of deferring to him. There are probably good grounds for this feeling. Besides, in turn, his friends are among people of influence and power, whose word goes further

with committees, especially with committees of the more cultured congregations, if his friends be not themselves on some committee. These are the men of influence in any community, and the way to a pastorate is through them. A candidate therefore is advantaged if he have many friends in this class, upon whom he can depend. Thus, for illustration, a man may sometimes climb up because of the talent or social standing of his wife, or because of her friends. We have a way of describing a man with such qualifications as "a man with a pull." It is a real and very powerful thing. It does not of necessity create qualifications, but it opens the door for the qualifications one has to enter, which, so far as attaining to place is concerned, may amount to the same thing, or may even exceed it.¹

That a pastor has increased the membership of his church, if shown apart from other greater qualifications, does not count for a great deal

¹ "There is nothing like a brilliant and beautiful wife to help a man on, and so Burton found it. He had done many clever and marvelous things during his life, but the best day's work he ever did for himself was when he married Isabel Arundell."—W. H. WILKINS in *The Romance of Lady Isabel Burton*.

with most committees. Often half of the men of the committee the candidate deals with are not themselves church members, to whom membership in a church is not of first importance. Such increase may mean to them the use of clap-trap methods—and, after all, it is more important to know how one has been converted, and to what, than to know that one has been converted some degree or other and to some thing or other. It may mean that the accessions are from among boys and girls, which fact must give a peculiar turn or emphasis to the estimate of the man. And the thoughtful layman knows that church membership is not synonymous with salvation, and that it may not be a thermometer of spiritual awakening or opportunity or attainment. To get people into the membership of the church is not the end of the church. One may be called not to baptize but to preach the Gospel.

I do not know that committees reason much about this, but I know they are not impressed with it as a qualification. They put the betterment of the financial condition of the church before it, they put an increase in the congregation before it, they put an added respect for the

church before it, and feel that increase in membership is the leaf that comes with the fruit, upon which other and best thing they would first insist.

For a candidate to be able to show a continued increase in salary, especially if in the same pastorate, or to show progress from smaller to larger churches, especially if rapid or steady, is a good asset. That one has recently received a call from another attractive church, that one is now being considered by another church, gives a candidate favor with a committee. For a committee to feel that perhaps they cannot have a man, very often makes them consider and want to hear him.

It is a standard and first principle in securing a consideration, that to be very eager for a consideration or for a call is to fail to get it. I have known a score of men to make wreck here. On the other hand, I have known men to win by virtue of a genuine unconcern as regards some particular place, growing out of a confidence that they could do better elsewhere. This indifference accounts for the stampede several churches sometimes make for the same man, who

may have even failed of serious consideration for a long time while nothing was promising. Nothing succeeds like success, nor fails like failure.

Age is not an insuperable disqualification if one has kept up with the times in thought and methods of work. The larger churches are ministered to by both young and old. Neither has a monopoly. No one feels that age is a disqualification if a man is fresh in his presentation of vital truth, and has a life to support his message. The dead line is not at years, but at formal thought and common life, and at languid zeal. An heroic life will always appeal to men, as will a living faith, and a hopeful message. Age has less to do with the dead line than have things entirely within men's hands to prevent or to alter. The messenger of God has cut loose from entangling concerns, and is ready to lose his life for Him he loves—without that the young man is already dead, and with that the aged man is wholly alive.

But churches differ much in character and culture and needs, as ministers differ in their qualifications, feeling, taste, emphasis, and

method of work. Some men are clearly unsuited to some churches. It is a waste of time for them to consider or to try for these. If they gain a hearing, or even take up the pastorate, it is only to show their unfitness, which a little care, to begin with, would have shown them. Yet there is hardly an accounting for congregations' tastes, which, like the ways of committees, are often past finding out.

VI

Gaining Information Concerning Vacant Pastorates

IN learning of vacancies, and in learning of the character of churches, the usual reliance is upon one's denominational paper. This, as a rule, gives fairly general, though always scanty, and often inaccurate information. More local denominational papers, such as of a State, often give prompter and fuller information. It is important to be in the way of knowing what vacancies occur, and extra pains taken at this point is economy, and may be the price of a needed advantage. The papers with larger circulation put many others in possession of the information they are giving you—the few who get the information more promptly are before the rush—which there is advantage and honor to be out of.

And more complete information than is af-

forded by these papers is almost indispensable. I recall the case of a vacancy that escaped notice in the general denominational papers. In consequence, few knew of it. The committee on pastor considered and heard every man who applied or was written about—some six in all. Two different candidates in succession were offered the place. It is likely there would have been as many as forty men seeking the place had the vacancy been announced in the papers. When, after a time, by the announcement that a call extended to a man had been declined, it became known that there was a vacancy, applications and recommendations came as a flood.

It is best, accordingly, not to rely wholly upon the brief notice of the general denominational papers, but for the time being to have access to several State or sectional organs as well, or even to dailies giving local news of more or less large sections. Let a man also apprise his friends of his wish to know of vacancies that may come to their knowledge. In these ways, too, other valuable information may be gained, that will determine the course to follow. Make a list of the

vacant churches of the class you feel qualified for, and tabulate the facts you can gain as to the time the resignation takes effect, the qualifications wanted, the character of the congregation, and the kind of ministry suited to their appreciation and coöperation; the Year-book information, the names of those on the committee and of influence in the congregation, the plans and methods of the committee, all the means you employ to gain a consideration and a hearing; the date, and a copy of all letters you write, the names of those who have written in your behalf, and the approximate date of their writing. This will show you your way and prevent confusion and oversight.

Only those who are ignorant of the first things in candidating try at the same time for any considerable number of places, though there must be many who are smitten with this stupidity. The chairman of a committee of a church paying a salary of something less than two thousand dollars has been quoted as saying that they had received over two hundred letters in reference to one hundred and twenty-five men. A church paying a salary of eight hundred dol-

lars had forty letters concerning twenty-eight men. An error in a denominational paper announcing a call that had not been given, and uncorrected for but a week, brought seven letters to the committee of a church with a contented pastor. There were men who had taken it for granted that he would leave! It was not announced that he had accepted the call—simply that he had received it. This illustrates the hit-or-miss method of some men, in a region requiring for success the greatest skill and the carefulest knowledge.

Such promiscuous and general effort on the part of men for the pastorate of churches they know nothing of—neither of the church's needs in a pastor nor of their qualification for the pastorate of that church—is clearly fruitful of immense harm to the calling. In the first place, the eager seeking for preferment is sore reflection upon the ministry, and to an incalculable degree limits the profession's influence. In the second place, the competition among so many who are eager to accept a given place, easily and surely lowers the salary. Churches feel they can get what they want from among so many—

it is not important to keep the salary higher—so many good and highly praised men are ready to come. The supply is greater than the demand, and the salary goes down. If there were but a few men from among whom one must be had, it would be felt that better inducements would have to be given to get the man needed. As it is, a church settles down to select the best from fifty or a hundred, much as a buyer of wares at an overstocked counter, and it is often found that in the process the salary has dropped one hundred or two hundred dollars. That the number of really qualified men is not so large as the flood of application would imply makes little difference. The general impression created of the large supply of available men, especially in the smaller churches, is not changed.

And this so general application to be considered by churches of which it must be known the would-be candidates know nothing, so cheapens the men who are in the flood of application and commendation that many committees put by the whole batch with but a casual attention. So, like drowning men, these applicants choke one another. Committees do not take such men nor

their letters altogether seriously. How can they? They are embarrassed by the magnitude of the matter. And apart from that, they feel that there is a kind of taint upon it. They hear of some man incidentally, or they learn of a man by inquiry of some one they personally know, whose interest they feel is genuine, and whose judgment they trust. Or after the rush is over, a letter comes to them to which they can give attention, because it has some strength and individuality about it, and because it does not come with a score of others.

And to have one's name go in at so many places puts a heavy tax upon the friends who write in one's behalf, so that there quickly comes a time when all but the stoutest and longest suffering revolt. I have written twelve times for a friend. A professor has written eight times for me, and I was so unsuited for these places that I was heard in no single one of them. One's friends will, under the circumstances, soon insist that one take a place less than one wants. They will argue from their candidate's failure to gain a hearing or to receive a call, that he is not qualified for the grade of place he wants,

and themselves beginning to doubt his strength, all the more write lukewarm letters. The candidate needs, therefore, to conserve the patience and good-will of his friends, directing their endeavor to such places as he is sure of special fitness for. Let him make the fact of his special fitness for a certain place the basis of energetic effort for a hearing. With the adoption of this more careful plan, let the candidate state to his friends the grounds of his special fitness, and arrange to have their letters fall somewhat apart from the general avalanche, upon which he will wisely count, and to be a part of which creates an unfavorable impression with the committee, if he comes out of the confusion of so many letters into any notice at all.

And such promiscuous and indiscriminate testimony concerning men whose peculiar fitness for the place is not fully believed in—because he does not know the qualifications of the man he is commending, or because he does not know the character and needs of the church to which he is commending him—cheapens testimony beyond belief. What authority has a letter that betrays that the writer does not know the church,

or is clearly by distance so removed that he cannot know the church, yet will dare to recommend a man! The whole matter of commendation is falling into disrepute, and in many instances carries scant weight. That testimony has value which shows knowledge of the needs of the place, and gives emphasis, not to generalities, but to the peculiar fitness of a man for the place. This is what makes the superiority of a letter from a man known to the members of a committee. Besides their knowing that he will deal honestly with them, they know that he is acquainted with their needs. Promiscuous and indiscriminate recommendation is not only ineffective, but involves the general practice in loss. The letters of those who cannot write with the enthusiasm of knowledge, and to the point, are notoriously weak, and throw fatal suspicion upon both their fairness and their seriousness.

A prime condition, therefore, of receiving serious consideration at the hands of a committee, is knowledge. This information concerning the qualifications wanted, and concerning the character of the constituency of the church from which the needed qualifications may be

inferred, and concerning the other matters above named, is not easily gained. The difficulty however, but emphasizes the importance of gaining it, and the great opportunity, and makes clear that the difficulty is not to be ignored, but overcome.

A candidate may have friends who are in a position to give this information. The various papers already spoken of may be helpful. Not risking their chances by themselves writing the committee, I have known men to send a list of questions to the clerk of an information bureau, or to the secretary of a bureau of pastoral supply, for him to get answers to. Let it be stated to the committee by these go-betweens that information is wanted for one who wants to act intelligently. This creates respect for the unknown person, and will usually bring the information. Or one may go among the neighboring ministers and make inquiries; or better still, have a friend go. Or this friend may write the committee stating that he wants to recommend a man to them if the facts concerning the church are such as to prove him specially suited to them. This sincerity and care

will win the confidence of the committee, and the correspondence will act as an introduction or acquaintance and give the recommendation weight when it comes. Committees, however, have many letters to write, and are apt to think the qualifications wanted by them matters of course, and vaguely to describe them; the writer will need to give his letter inherent weight to commend it to attention. Or let your friends write to several members of the church or congregation. Answer will be received from some, and the information wanted.

Time and care spent in gaining this information will prove the very best of investments. Having gained it, concentrate on the few churches for which you have points in your favor. With these churches you have the advantage over other candidates. It should be borne in mind that in a matter of this importance, haphazard and chance cannot hope to succeed against careful planning and wise effort. Therefore, do not wear out the good-will of your friends—your best asset—by ordering its expenditure on blind ventures. I have known a man to have a campaign launched against a

committee, involving letters from four of his strongest sponsors, after the church had called a pastor. Good capital was thus utterly wasted. Keep posted on what the situation is in the few churches you are trying for, and take advantage of the opportunities that will be revealed to you. You might, to this end, enlist the interest of a pastor near the vacant church, or even the minister in a different denomination, who would give reports of the situation. By some means you should know what is being done. Should, for instance, there be a lull in the pressure, or the committee exhaust the list of those selected as candidates, or there be any like favorable situation, have other letters written in your behalf. Give care to finding what ones, if any, of your friends are known personally to the men of influence in this church. That is a door. If it exists you cannot afford to miss it.

VII

Securing a Consideration and a Hearing

THE simplest way of securing a hearing is to put the matter in the hands of the superintendent of some pastoral bureau, an office existing in most denominations to bring churches and pastors together. The difficulties of the office are tremendous, and the men in charge doubtless do the best that can be done. Yet those who push and keep pushing are recommended to the places, who probably would push for the places in any case, and the men of fine sensibility, for whom the bureaux were established, that they might be relieved of the unpleasantness of seeking and pushing for place, are not profited. Men who are in hard circumstances are given the preference—men who will rehearse their woes—and, indeed, there are those whom no one would begrudge this preference. One man in accounting for his success

with one of these superintendents explained—
“I camped down in the city and went to see him every day.”

Besides, if recommendations to committees are made, they are to churches smaller than you want. Conducting your own campaign you will try for churches larger than the superintendent will send you to. And he is not to blame for this. He has among his clients more small churches wanting men than he has men willing to serve them, and more strong men than he has large churches. So he must scale things to a sort of equality, urging churches to pay more salary than they offer, and assuming that candidates will accept less salary than they ask.

Bureaux of pastoral supply are not to be recommended as a sole reliance. Their value lies in supplementing the work done by others. They afford a consulting agency with more or less authority, and are of great value in the case of smaller churches for giving names of available men, and in the case of larger churches, for consultation concerning men in whom committees have themselves already become inter-

ested. The value of these bureaux, however, is on the increase, though they are overrun with willing candidates, many of whom have to be eliminated by one process or another, and all of whom have to have their desires scaled down to make anywheres enough available places. No one would wisely rely wholly upon a bureau, yet no one would wisely ignore it. In writing to a committee, it is best not to give this superintendent's name as a reference, and to have no one else give it. To give it, needlessly advertises that you are pressing your case, for the superintendent does not have to solicit men, and has only men who are more or less in distress as to finding a place. Men who have not themselves failed to gain a hearing do not have their name with the superintendent. But, while not giving the superintendent's name as a reference, it is wise to have your name on his list. If you have your name with him he will favor you more than otherwise, should he be consulted regarding you—after all, you are one of his men. And churches asking the superintendent to suggest names of available men are referred only to those whose names are with the superintendent

—he does not know what other men are available.

The commonest and easiest way to bring one's name before a committee is for one to write regarding himself. I cannot get rid of the feeling that this is the honorable way. It disguises nothing, and will not attempt a disguise. I have often wondered that committees should regard this way with so much disapproval. It confesses one's interest in the pastorate in question, to be sure. But this is just its virtue. Do committees suppose that letters from others are not solicited, nor have behind them an interested man? Now the man who will not resort to that subterfuge, but will rest his case with the truth regarding his interest confessed, is to this extent the better morally qualified. And the moral qualification is the minister's chiefest asset.

There are, however, serious objections to this method. It will not do at all with the larger churches. Here, though one may seek the place, it will not do to seem to seek it; here the qualifications demanded point to recommendation by influential friends, which it is presumed the man

they want must have. And to write in reference to oneself does in some way involve a certain loss of fineness, which is any man's chief asset, most of all the minister's.

There are also so many similar letters received by the committee that yours is swamped, and you are classed with others of whom, as a matter of fact, committees have unfavorable opinion. To test the value of this method I have written to small churches I would not at all consider, asking to be heard as a candidate. And I have had not so much as an answer to my letters! And other men use better methods, competing with whom you have no chance if writing for yourself. I have invariably had but indifferent success writing for myself, and the failure, I think I may maintain, has not been due to the lack of qualifications I could set forth for the places I tried for, but to the contempt committees have for the method. A man cannot write fully in self-praise, and if he does, cannot hope to have what he has written taken unchallenged. And committees are not at pains to look up the man who writes of himself, and will not look him up, when other men are being highly praised

to them by others, it may be by those of great influence.

It is a mistake to suppose that committees will be at pains to take the initiative and make inquiry concerning a man. They have too many men concerning whom full information has been put into their hands. They will make inquiry after a first interest is aroused, but seldom to begin with. For only think, were you on a committee, what you should do under the circumstances. Consider the men whose recommendation by influential friends is already in your hands, of course.

In writing concerning oneself, one commonly refers to several well-known men and invites the committee to make inquiry of them. This requires that the committee write some three or four letters for each applicant, and should the committee follow the method with even those applicants whose letters give promise of qualification, to write the necessary letters would make a task too great to undertake. They will give preference to those men who have been recommended by others. If in your letter no references are given to men who can be written to, and

even the matter of finding such as can speak is thrown back upon the committee with the suggestion that they may in this way arrive at an unbiased estimate, that but adds to the work of the already burdened committee. It may even seem to argue that a man has no friends of reputation who can write in his behalf.

And churches have occasionally been disappointed in men who have come to them without the indorsement of others, and are doubtless rightly suspicious of men who cannot come recommended to their confidence.

Committees doubtless follow the logic of their situation, which makes the writing of many letters an added and unnecessary task. They consider the men who have their praise on hand, rather than the men who tell them, "You can get my praise by writing for it." But some committees are learning better.

I have sometimes explained in letters to committees that I thought this method of writing concerning oneself more honorable than having one's friends write. But either they did not agree with me, or could not see that this was the alternative. It would appear that com-

mittees either are not aware that letters from others have been solicited, or that they do not care if they are.

As a matter of fact, most letters of commendation are solicited. Judging from my own experience I should say there are very few that are not. I know of but two letters in regard to me that were not formally solicited, and I had said to several persons that I should value their help if they could find occasion to give it. And while I have written occasional letters for others unasked, I knew that they had asked others to write in their behalf. I have been asked times enough to know how general is the asking.

I do not condemn the practice of asking others to write. What I condemn is the deliberate subterfuge to which the letters often owe their force. The fact of this can hardly be called in question. The director of one of our boards of pulpit supply, together with other advice, gives this warning—not to have so many letters written in reference to oneself, nor to have them fall so close together, as to give the impression that they have been solicited. And he has large experience of the effective way. What is ob-

jected to, and must be felt to be blamable by everyone who puts the most honorable things first, and freely commits his life to them, is the deliberate deception. There is quite enough commonplace ethics without his living by such, who is the minister of Christ. Such a man may succeed for a time as a candidate, but he is undermining his foundation as a minister, and losing his soul. Yes, and the way of steadfast allegiance to the best, though narrow, is after all the very way to honor and to place, as the Gospel witnesseth.

This point of view, if a committee can be brought to it in some casual way, such as the placing in their hands the discussion here set forth, would bring them to conclude the superior qualification of him who will not gild his heart's wish by subterfuge, and secure their interest in him. It would doubtless remove objection to the open-hearted self-commitment of candidates, and lead some one to advocate the considering the man who frankly states his own case, as showing by his self-commitment high moral qualification, rather than the opposite. Surely they would be bound to reflect upon his fairness

and high honor with admiration. And that is the widest door a candidate can open for his entrance.

Between writing for oneself, which is not effective, and concealing the part one plays in having others write, which is not honorable, is this other way, which is quite effective in most cases, and is a way of exalted honor: Insist that those who write for you make it clear to the committee that you want to be considered, and that they state your feeling on the matter of their writing. "Mr. Noble is unwilling that I should write and not say that he has suggested my writing." He who writes for you will write all the more strongly, because of his admiration for your feeling, and it would be strange if some one on the committee would not be impressed with your sense of high honor, and champion your candidacy. I take it, they would all be interested in hearing a man preach who has such a practical grip on noble things. Besides—and this is the point—a man with such a temper and such enthusiasm for the best will not lack friends who can speak great things in his praise, nor be without that quality of life that will show

him to a congregation as most worthy, should he stand before them. Being comes before doing, and before being praised, and is pledge of all good things, so that the way to praise and to place is to be superior.

The wise candidate will employ both of these methods. With some churches he will write concerning himself. This will be no mere venture in case preparation has been made for it by the introduction of the committee beforehand to the advantage of the method here indicated. Doubtless, the reading of such reflections would bring to many a committee a changed estimate of him who thus commits himself. Were this preparation followed by an open-hearted letter, suggesting that a word of inquiry directed to certain named men would bring to the committee information concerning you, and stating a few facts about yourself—just enough to give range for showing your spirit, or to give an atmosphere—the letter would doubtless gain attention. Say that you are desirous that they learn enough of you to show either your fitness or your unfitness—that you have learned enough of them to come to feel that you are suited for

the place, and tell the source of your information. Say that you are not alone in this persuasion, and give names of those who think as you do. Say that a reply indicating their interest will lead you to have those who can speak of you write to them—that you will confer with the committee should they wish. Say what kind of a place you feel yourself suited for, and modestly state your aim as a minister. Make the letter short and concise; and remember that it is a sort of photograph of yourself. Do not be too eager for the place; then you will not appear to the committee to be. Desire the place for the good you may do, and because you are really and peculiarly fitted for work there; then the atmosphere of your letter will be healthy and honest.

With other churches the wise candidate will employ the recommendations of friends.

In a practice combining some of the advantages of both methods, the person writing openly in regard to himself, instead of giving names of friends as references, ventures to inclose two or three letters addressed to these friends, and ready for the signature of the com-

mittee, asking for information along designated lines concerning the person in question. It is so easy to sign and mail these that it is done upon ordinary justification, and these requests bring the indorsement desired.

VIII

The Persons whose Recommendation will have Influence

PERSONS known to influential members of the church that is looking for a pastor, and persons known to the committee and respected by them as persons of careful judgment, and personal friends of influential members of the church or of the committee, are the best persons to stand sponsor for one wishing to be given a hearing. A friend of one of the committee has a minister friend; he may or may not be better qualified than a dozen other men who do not have this specific advantage. Qualifications over and above a certain point have very little to do with one's receiving a consideration or a hearing. This man has a friend who has influence with the committee. That is his great advantage. And, after all, how really dependent we are on our friends—those flowers of the unselfish life. The chairman of a supply

committee is known to the principal of an academy whose friend desires a new pastorate. The principal calls the attention of the chairman of the committee to the fact that this friend has qualifications for the pastorate of his church. And so he is at that advantage. In many of the States there are ministers who are a sort of natural bishop, to whose advice or judgment many churches defer. Such persons are men of wide acquaintance with ministers and churches; they are good judges of men, and are careful in recommending men as candidates. With these also, men seeking pastorates may do well to confer, acquainting them, so far as may be, with their peculiar qualifications. These men of influence render a most excellent service, and should look upon this as one large way in which they may serve. Secretaries of societies, or superintendents of missionary work, editors, and pastors of influence, may be classed thus.

The recommendations of those who are not known to the committee count for much if they are pastors of important churches, or if they write with the discrimination and authority that show them worthy to be believed in. Letters

from persons quite unknown to the committee count for less; the matter has doubtless been somewhat abused, and committees are apt to look upon letters from pastors who are unknown as favors to other pastors, and a sort of etiquette of the profession. Yet even so these letters may be written in such a way as to carry weight. The word of some business man or of some professional man, who perhaps may know better than ministers what things count with committees—who, it may be, has been on such a committee—will go much further. But better than that one's friend write, is that such friend make a visit to some member or members of the committee. This, being personal and exceptional, and revealing a certain enthusiasm in the enterprise, makes an impression, and the person so represented stands out from the score of others whose identity is lost in the conventional mass. A member of a committee may in such an interview give pledges he would not write, and for no other reason than that he has been urged to act.

Having learned of the church for which you are fitted, and having decided that you will have

others commend you to the confidence of the committee, the greater task is to command the men who can bring you to the attention of the committee with authority. Here a wide acquaintance is very valuable. Apart from the circumstances themselves showing the way, probably the best thing to do is to write to your friends, saying that you are trying for the named place, and to ask if they know anyone in the church to whom they are willing to speak of your fitness. Keep in sympathetic touch with your friends, and do not ask them to write where they are not known, save in the case of those few who are well known to you. You may thus happen upon some one who is in a position to bring you forward. Or, if you must, boldly have your friends who are willing write even to those to whom they are not known. Many men have to resort to this, though where others are using the better method this method will not gain first consideration.

Have the letters of your friends fall apart from the general avalanche, and somewhat apart from one another, and have them go to different members of the committee. If written by men

who are well known, two letters will be ample; otherwise four will be better. But have the letters bear upon specific things among your qualifications.

Where your most influential friends are unknown to members of the committee, or to influential members of the church, have some person of reputation among your friends write in your behalf to some minister of large influence, who by proximity to the vacant church, or otherwise, is known by its committee. This second doctor of divinity does not know you, but he does know the other doctor or friend who writes in your behalf, and this second indorses what the first has written and puts it in the hands of the committee. It has thus much the same force as though it came originally from him.

From your file of the Year-book find if any of your friends were formerly located near the church you want to be heard in. There may be some such one who is known to the committee—altogether one of those best suited to suggest the name of a candidate.

Sometimes a pastor, living near the vacant church, even though unknown to you, will at the

suggestion of a friend of yours open his pulpit to you, and at the same time invite to be present the committee of the neighboring church looking for a pastor. Or if he will not invite the committee, he will invite some one or two of influence in the congregation at least. If the candidate does well, these will urge the committee to consider and hear him. It is a round-about way, but often good, just for that reason. A man must be willing to preach under such circumstances without remuneration, and be willing to do it a half dozen times if he can arrange occasions. It has its advantages: it asks no one to indorse you; it is not asking the pastor to vouch for you, beyond what he probably would be willing to do for courtesy; and it puts the heavy demand upon the candidate himself. It can, of course, be very easily overdone.

In making such an arrangement make it with as large a church as possible; it adds influence for one to come so associated, and you will hardly do your best before a small congregation, or in a small audience room.

Candidating is, therefore, in the first instance, a matter of having influential friends who will

bring one to the attention of committees, and do it with an enthusiasm born of belief in their candidate's high qualifications. Things really wait for the effort of such men. Upon the whole, I think that men are not unwilling to render this service. Rather, on the other hand, they are glad when they know first hand of a man really qualified. Few things have given me more pleasure than the introduction to committees of a few men of faith and power, who had a noble and worthy life, a message, and the command of their art.

If a candidate lacks such friends or such qualifications, it may well be his first work to gain them. He may have to gain the favor of such men much as he would gain the favor of a committee, by proving his qualifications, by showing that he is a good minister of Jesus Christ.

With this in view and stating his object, let such an one offer to take the Sunday services of some influential man. This plan brings one's pulpit qualifications to his attention better than can be done in any other way. He can then speak from personal knowledge. This occasion

will give chance also for personal acquaintance, which will reveal one's inner temper and point of view and one's character, which, to one who is to recommend a candidate, are as important as knowledge of one's pulpit ability. And it will arouse his interest and his sympathy, which are good assets. The men who have done most for me, who have written oftenest and with most enthusiasm, have been men who were familiar at first hand with my work. I had preached before them in their own church. I had been a guest in their home. In a sense they had become my friends. To put this man in possession of fuller knowledge of your qualifications, have a number of persons write him in reference to you, just as if he were on a committee.

This course implies confidence in one's qualifications and lengthens one's campaign, but men will write strongly under these conditions if they are favorably impressed, and one must trust to making a good impression as one does when before a committee. Candidating is often a very serious business, and doubtless grows more so. It must be met with the willingness to attempt hard and thoroughgoing things,

both in gaining high qualifications and in proving to others the possession of those qualifications. There is in the ministry very little for the man who brings to it less than a thorough-going devotion and enthusiasm.

In asking your friends to write in your behalf, state to them what you have learned about the qualifications the church desires in a pastor, in order that their letters may speak of you as meeting those particular needs. This witness being appropriate will at once command the interest of a committee. If a strong preacher is wanted above all else, would it not be bungling procedure not to have the fact that you are regarded as such brought to their attention?

To insure their writing something definite, give your friends some facts about yourself and your work. They cannot know many points, and will not be at pains to think. Make a synopsis of points—pulpit ability, pastoral work, executive ability, work accomplished, work among young people, distinctions won, your family, your training, etc., and ask them to say what they can on some of the points.

80 *THE ART OF CANDIDATING*

The following indicates what is suggested:

Education:

Fitting school—Clinton High School.

College—Princeton.

Seminary—Union, New York City.

Record of distinctions, prizes, honors, scholarships won.

Pastorates:

Madison. First year's salary, \$1,000.

 Sixth year's salary, \$1,200.

Length of pastorate, seven years. Copy any expression given by the officers of the church or by the dismissing body. State any increase in membership and in church expenditures; refer to any notable work accomplished during pastorate. Give as references names of men of influence in the church, and names of influential ministers who know of your work.

Richmond, Prospect Street, Present pastorate.

Salary, \$1,700.

Membership of church, 380.

Record of distinctions and honors; addresses of importance made; offices held, etc. Evidences of appreciation and confidence.

Special lines of work followed.

General character of ministry.

Family: members of. Persons of prominence in your or your wife's family.

References: Names of laymen and ministers who know of your qualifications and may be consulted; especially any who may be known to, or may live near, the one you are writing to.

Calls to pastorates received recently and declined, if any.

Make it clear that this schedule is not to be sent to committees, but is for the information of him to whom it is sent, in order that he may better know the facts concerning you.

In asking the courtesy of a letter in your behalf from a person of influence, it may be well to state, in instances that will suggest themselves, that under the method of settlement practiced, a candidate is dependent upon the indorsement of such men as he, and then ask the privilege of more fully acquainting him with your qualifications, as has been suggested in the case of the

influential pastor in whose church you preached, and in whose home you were a guest. Upon his consenting to be interested in your behalf, in addition to the above suggested schedule sent him by yourself, have several friends from your parish or from your former parish—such as are known to him preferably, or men known to him as men of influence—write him in regard to your character and qualifications and work, treating him as if he were a committee whose favorable consideration you wished to gain. Of course you cannot ask this privilege of all men, and there is no need that all men resort to these methods, but it is sometimes the only means one has of gaining the necessary influence with committees. One's success in using this method will be greatest with the pastor of a medium-sized church. Pastors of large churches are overburdened with this work, and are apt to decline entering upon a task involving so much interest. This general method is the point of contact between your community where you are known and a community where you are seeking to be known, by using the medium of men of more or less reputation and influence.

Time will probably be required to learn who among your friends can be relied upon to write strongly and heartily in your favor. Some men will write because they have been asked; it is a great deal easier to write something lukewarm than to decline writing altogether. But such a stinted letter will undo the good of several other letters full of hearty praise. A candidate will learn these men in time. You may put some men to the test with the churches you care least for. Yet it may happen that by the time you know these men to favor you, their patience, by their much writing, is exhausted. I know of no better way than this, if you have to use men of whom you are not sure. You cannot ask them to write strongly or not to write at all. When you ask them to speak of you, it is for better or for worse.

Let an appeal be here made for brotherly courtesy—for the application of the rule of Christ toward the brethren who are seeking a pastorate. Doubtless, no service will be more appreciated than kindly interest or help given a candidate. Without another's help scarcely any pastoral changes are made, and the method

in vogue among our churches rests upon that practice. There are men in pastorates who forget how they themselves have been helped into them; forget that there are those whom they can serve; forget that in this way they may render valuable service to the Church of Christ; forget that committees depend upon this service and welcome it in fair measure, and always welcome it when it concerns a man of ability and promise, or when it is done with discrimination and knowledge of conditions. The kindly attitude is that which will lend itself to an acquaintance with candidates, and standing, in any particular case, between the candidate and the church he seeks, do what is right to both. Let men who are in comfortable pastorates be disposed to learn of the qualifications of those who are seeking a pastorate, and consider if there be some church where one of them may fitly and abundantly serve. The golden rule shows us our way—As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: as ye have received, gratefully give.

IX

The Candidate's General Attitude

IT is important that the candidate's effort to be considered by a committee should not impress the committee with his anxiety or great desire to be called to the church he seeks. However, if associated with a quiet indifference, he may frankly let them know of his effort to secure a hearing, and his energy may then seem to them all the more commendable. Upon the whole, anything that betrays a candidate's eagerness for a call to a field materially lessens his chances of getting it. On the other hand, a kind of indifference increases his chances. The man a committee may not be able to get it is more than likely they will want; and, of course, there are good grounds for this law of human nature. At the same time it is equally important that he make it clear that he would seriously consider a call should it be given.

Committees like to feel that they are bestowing a favor that will be appreciated; that the candidate will value the opportunity they have in their hands to offer.

The advice I mean to give least of all is to *assume* this indifference. That is not the alternative. The advice I mean to give is to *feel* the indifference. The alternative is not to assume that you have not worked for yourself, but to work for yourself, so to speak, from above, and not from below. Be so honest with the committee that they will see that you are not concealing anything—that you are given to the wholly worthy. But impress them with your indifference to their decision. And be indifferent to it. “He that believeth shall not make haste.”

The application of the principle of independence rather than of the servile spirit may be made to a subsequent stage of progress. For instance, when asked to supply a vacant pulpit, one may feel warranted in insisting that the church vote beforehand whether or not they will call anyone they have already heard, and that, should he himself be heard, they will vote at once whether or not to give him a call. That is,

he may feel warranted in asking certain things as the condition upon which he is willing to be a candidate. If they do not grant what he asks, that opportunity is gone, for the present. But if they do not find a man at once, they will doubtless come back to him, and in that event he has greatly enhanced his chances, as he certainly has if they grant his request at once. This creates just the opposite impression from that created by one's writing in reference to himself or by one's eagerness to receive a call.

I have heard of a case where the votes of a church were apparently much divided among a number of candidates, when one of them, learning of the situation, and struck with horror that he should be in such a competition, wrote, withdrawing his name. In an instant his indifference to whether he was offered the place, compared with a more or less fear shown by the others lest they should not be offered it, turned the vote almost unanimously in his favor. Not to be anxious to go as a candidate, nor to appear anxious to go as a candidate, and not to be anxious to receive a call, nor to appear anxious to receive a call, are the first rules in can-

didating, as the principle, in general application, is true of life. "He that would lose his life will save it."

I have heard it argued, and with much force, that it is seldom a man is called to a pastorate who is not already fairly decided upon by expectation before he is heard by the congregation. Often, indeed, according to what is expected is the thing that is found. People generally are inclined to like a man if they have made up their minds to like him. Accordingly, the impression created by a candidate before ever he goes to preach is of great importance. He must stand out, if possible, in some clear and strong light as superior and do beforehand those things and only those things that will predispose people in his favor. Barely to receive an invitation to supply a vacant pulpit is not great gain.

Your interest as a candidate and, should you be called, your interest as pastor, lies in a special fitness for the church under consideration. And upon receiving invitation to supply the pulpit for a Sunday there is only gain in replying to that blind invitation, that your

only interest is in the pastorate of the church, and that if the committee's thought in the invitation has reference to that, you are willing to come, and then only in case they can assure you that they have made careful inquiry regarding you and have been led to believe you specially suited to meet the needs of the church. You yourself, by what you have learned of them, will have come to the same conclusion, and may now declare your wish to make further inquiry concerning them and may insist that there be on their part reasonable conviction of your fitness. This is due you, and the insistence upon it to them, and the showing them that you are interested not merely in securing the place, but in establishing the fact of your fitness therefor, will set you out from the score of others who compass the narrow idea of merely getting the pastorate, and will mightily commend you to the committee's confidence. Your object is not to get a place, but to be called to the right place, and in going as a candidate you ought to be considering the people as well as they be considering you; and this you may well give them to understand.

Occasionally a church goes a long time without finding a desirable man, or is unable to agree upon one, and becomes, so to say, sidetracked. They have exhausted their list of candidates; no letters of application or recommendation are received; no men are brought to the attention of the committee; a temporary supply has been engaged, and it is forgotten by many that the church is without a pastor. And yet, apart from a surface apathy, they are eager to hear of qualified men. This is the opportunity for the good man who has kept posted as to the situation and now has his name presented or re-presented. At such a time a word of commendation is taken at its full value. A letter from a candidate concerning himself may not now be passed unconsidered. Or one may interview some member of the committee. At another time to do this would be suicidal, but now in their distress, it might not be regarded with disfavor. Therefore, keep your list of available places posted up carefully, and keep in continued touch with the places you have decided that you have special fitness for.

This special fitness for some place he has

found, is the chief asset of the candidate. If he has established in his own mind the fact of that fitness in reference to any church, he is a bungler if he readily gives up effort to persuade the church of that same fact. And if now the field has become clear he has an added chance.

Indeed, in any event, it is advisable that one consider those churches that have already spent a few months in hearing candidates. By that time the people have come to seriously face the issue; have somewhat indulged the novelty of new men, and now center their interest on the man who is with them and not on some great one who they hope will come. By this time, too, they have been several times disappointed and know better what they can command. They have become somewhat acquainted with the class they have to choose from and know its limitations, and may be wondering if they have not had their hopes set far beyond what their means will command. And by this time, too, the rush of application and commendation is past, and letters can be given deserved attention. It often takes a church a year to call a pastor, and the

first two or three months are for the most cases quite preliminary; and July and August are hardly to be counted.

One may not be able to fix the time of one's going to preach before any church, but one can insist upon some things. A candidate is entitled to know how matters stand: for example, whether the church has had a vote on the men they have heard. He may refuse to go to a church in July and August, when the congregation is not representative, and he may refuse to stake everything upon one Sunday, and may ask that he be given two. This request, if granted, will give him a chance to spend the intervening week with the people and to learn something of the character of the parish. One will, by a revelation of his character, often make friends during that time who will support his candidacy. And one can learn something of the temper of the people and preach a more fitting sermon the second Sunday; or may find elements that make it clear that he will be unable to do his best work there. When a committee makes advances, and the invitation to supply is given, one may then wisely take the

attitude of indifference, or even of demand. Try for two Sundays, unless the committee has decided against it for all candidates. If you cannot have the Sunday following the one assigned, declare your willingness to wait till you can have two together. The better you can become acquainted, the more people you can meet, the more generally strengthened are your chances of finding the right place.

Arrange with the chairman of the committee to present you during your stay to the other members of the committee, and to other influential members of the church and congregation. Do not intrude conversation regarding the affairs of the church nor ask questions. It presupposes you are taking for granted that they incline to give you a call. Let them introduce the matter. If they do, you may make all the inquiries you want. But do not appear eager for the place. Should you spend the week in the place, make calls on some few of the influential people in company with the chairman or the leading member of the committee, not alone, nor with the lower end of the committee, and show your-

self as approachable and as easy of conversation as possible.

I have not the least doubt that the crucial point is passed when a candidate resolves that in the work before him he will strictly maintain his integrity and live by the gospel he declares. In his effort he will be frank and open, and live not by what is customary and allowable, but by what is according to Jesus Christ. The gravest danger is not that a man should not attain to a high place, but that he should so far lose the sense of values as to sacrifice his heart's own approval for the sake of place, and have nothing better than the place. But truly the way to a high place is the way of humility—to put first, at every cost, the worthiest things. All things are set to favor real goodness—no one can pin to right and fail. This is not insisted upon in the feeling that men may resort to unapproved means to secure a hearing, but to make clear that there is a higher standard than what is common and approved and withal very respectable—namely, the standard of the heroic. The need of the Church to-day is of men who will

do more than the rest. Christianity is not a religion of the medium, but of the sublime.

He who is living in a way that makes real goodness compelling is more desired than he who for the sake of gain has surrendered the real goodness and power of life. No good in a candidate can be compared to a good life—by very likeness to Christ to bear witness to the reality and the joy and the power of the kingdom of God. Better an obscure parish with this peace and this dominion than a metropolitan church without it. Though surely the life will bring the place. If, however, by any sophistry a minister of Christ be led to take the way of prudence, be it known he will surely yet come to confess the utterness of his failure and to the loss of his place. A minister's success may tarry till he learns that his first business is to live a humble, holy life; then he will be exalted. Exactly this is his gospel. He must so thoroughly believe it that his life will not belie it. The ministry is already being purged of dross. Churches—he who runs may read—are calling for men of vision and of more than

average power, and will have, if they can find them, leaders who make real the world of the Spirit, who know whom they have believed and are fully persuaded, who rejoice in sacrifice, who dare to live the Gospel. And these alone can proclaim it with power.

X

Candidating Sermons: General Preparation

THE candidate who has been invited to preach before the committee of a church, or before the congregation, is like one who has qualified for a race—he has passed one trial, and outstripped a number; he has yet to win in the contest. Without this last all that has gone before counts for nothing. As a candidate, I felt that I had about half finished my task with any church, when I had received an invitation to preach as a candidate. Yet this ratio varies much. I know a church that heard eighteen candidates—about one half the number brought to the committee's attention. That, of course, was hardly to treat the matter seriously, and indicates that the committee was not concerned to consider carefully the qualifications of the men available. On the other hand, I

have known a man to fail at a dozen different places where he had been heard as a candidate. Such men as he have power in securing favorable preliminary consideration, but cannot justify the high terms in which they have been praised, or have not been at pains to consider before going as a candidate whether they are fitted for the place.

The great distance some candidates, when their preaching and their other qualifications are put to the test, come from even the likelihood of receiving a call, indicates the ease with which they secure consideration, and the inability of committees to discriminate at a distance, and how important it is that those who recommend candidates do not overdo it. It indicates also the great safeguard to churches there is in the preaching by candidates of trial sermons, and in the attendant revelation of qualifications.

Within certain limits as much depends upon the wisdom with which candidating sermons are chosen as upon the superior qualifications of the man. What passes for lack of superior qualifications with a committee or a church

may be only lack of wisdom in the choice of candidating sermons, or lack of wisdom in the making of sermons for this particular purpose. Of a half dozen candidates heard by a church, careful in the selection, may it not be that everyone has sermons that will approve him to the church, if only he knows which they are.

In describing the candidate's sermon I am not expected to give instruction in the art of preaching in general, nor to indicate the qualifications of a good minister of Jesus Christ. There are abundant treatises on the subject with which really serious preachers are familiar. Nor can what I am to say here be a substitute for thorough training in the art, as if I implied that a minister could vastly improve his qualifications by what he reads here, and a poor preacher be thereby made a good one; not at all. There is no such easy and short way. I rather take for granted the preaching power, such as it is in any man, and aim to show, not how he may increase it, but how he may turn that power into a given channel, and accomplish the most with it.

Preaching is one of the most difficult of arts, and rests back upon careful training, and upon the life, or soul, as well, of which it is the expression, and from which it gets its power. Preaching is first and after all a matter of personality. Only where there is a superior life lived can one with power be declared. For example, no one can really preach honesty who is not sacrificing for the sake of it, nor win one to a superior life, who is not himself living it. Where there is a superior life lived, the preaching of it can hardly be avoided. It will be revealed in a hundred ways. All preaching is tested by that standard, and cannot long escape the testing. A sermon is thus a sort of transcript of life—a revelation in the last, of the preacher. No lesson in homiletical technique learned from books, however helpful, can be a substitute for the experience of the abundant life, nor for the certainty of the goodness of God, which is the preacher's message. We say we go to church to hear a sermon. What we go to hear is a man, and if he is God's man we go again and again. Personality is the only vehicle for the

transmitting of life. The preacher's sermon cannot rise above his life, nor raise people above it. Preaching is thus the expression of the preacher's soul. It is a heartless judgment and revelation of life. Out of a really divine life nothing common comes.

It will go with the saying that every good sermon is not a good candidating sermon. The candidate who should take for his text, "Thou shalt not steal," however apropos and splendid his own people may have esteemed the sermon when he preached it to them, would have little sense of fitness, or of humor. A pastor will preach to his own congregation upon themes, and in ways, that would be unwise before another congregation. He must instruct—preaching sermons hard to listen to; he must denounce—uttering very plain words; but in a candidating sermon he must, above all, inspire. He will show the richness of the world and the goodness of life, and lay bare the love of God. This fact is his good news, and the candidate is being tested as to his gospel. Men want to know that goodness is on the throne: anything else is a disappoint-

ment, and cheapens and belittles life and the prophetic calling, both of which it is the candidate's task to glorify.

Experience is doubtless the best guide in the preparation of candidating sermons. The rule is for one to try with congregations what are thought to be one's best sermons. This involves patient labor and waiting, and though repeated failure is a high price to pay, to follow the plan is doubtless the part of wisdom. A candidate ought to know beforehand about what effect his sermon will have. Anything else is hit-or-miss method, and indicates an unpreparedness for serious candidating not in keeping with the greatness of the task. For only think: a candidate has been at pains to learn that he is fitted for the place, and by dint of care has secured a hearing, and then meets the opportunity with a sermon he has once proved to be poor, or that he has not proved at all, or that he does not know is strong, and competes with men who, terribly in earnest, have proved their words to be constraining.

One, therefore, should rely upon an actual

test of the value of a sermon for candidating purposes, rather than wholly upon one's judgment, or upon the praise of one's own people. However good a sermon may be thought to be, it should be put to this test. Referring to how my own knowledge of the way was gained, I must say that it was by failure. I eliminated from use the sermons that made no impression, and confined myself to those that were received with favor and overtures of place. This experience gave me the knowledge according to which I was able to prepare effective candidating sermons. I came to know beforehand about what impression they would make. The assurance when preaching that I was making a good impression gave me the confidence that is the condition of one's doing the best.

XI

Particular Characteristics of Candidating Sermons

THE first characteristic of a good candidating sermon is that it deal with some fundamental aspect of life. There are texts and subjects that are relatively trivial. I have heard of a sermon on "Grass," on "The Sea," on "The Lost Arts," on "The Harmony of the Ideal and the Practical," on "Jerusalem," and they doubtless were all good. But there are deeper things touching men's hopes and fears. These former make little and insignificant the calling of the preacher and the sermon he preaches. Has he no word from God to the soul that he must compete with essayists? Has he no witness to bear for Christ, whose herald he is? On any of these subjects a man may speak with interest and charm and show great genius and

learning, but what of it? Are there no great aspirations and hopes of the soul he can interpret to us—no assurance he can give us of the goodness of God? The candidate who comes after him with one half his genius has twice his power. Men are drawn to him by the greatness of his words: he speaks for God. He says, There are grounds for hope—fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; there are grounds for enthusiasm for the Gospel—I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation; there is a higher order of living—I am come that you may have life and may have it more abundantly; our faith rests upon foundations—our fellowship is with the Father; no man can do right and fail—godliness is profitable for all things; the movement of things is upward—what can separate us from the love of Christ? What depths these words lay bare in the resources of life and in the order that surrounds us! How they bring charm and hope and courage to men! How they ennoble the calling of the preacher and make him loved because of the good news he

brings! Religion owes its power to the nobility of its ideals, and to lay these bare is to meet the secret longing of the heart and to prove the goodness of God. Preaching is vain that does not lay bare a power greater than our own, that makes for righteousness:—that is, God. The pulpit has business to deal with a hundred themes, but if it neglects the deepest and greatest, it becomes bankrupt. A candidating sermon must start with a great text and deal with great facts, and the greatest fact of all life is the goodness of God.

The sermon should deal with the positive side of life rather than with the negative. "I have kept the faith," is a great deal better than "I have sinned." Men need to be convicted of sin, but they do not feel that sin is the great fact of life, as would be implied if the first sermon they heard a man preach was given to proving it. The one to preach on that is their own pastor. The great fact of life is not sin, but redemption from it. The victorious, hopeful, heroic side of life is to be set forth. And one dare set forth any truth he wants to, so long as he does it in a

positive way, and does not put his truth in contrast to something else which he denies.

And what is to be dealt with is life, not theology; experience, not philosophy; fact, not theory; the practical, not the scholastic; the real, not the pietistic. Salvation is the participation in the thought and life of God, and we come into it by knowing the facts of our world and of our lives. Theology, neither old nor new, is wanted, not because it is old nor because it is new, but because it is theology. Botany is the science of flowers; we want a bouquet. Theology is the science of God; we want God. The recipe for bread will not feed us. Close analysis may quite spoil the finest poetic ideas. We do not solemnly argue about a joke, nor ask how many steps there were in Jacob's ladder. Theology has its place, and its place is often the sermon, but certainly its place is not a candidating sermon. A sermon that moves in the realm of thought rather than in the realm of life will provoke disagreement and dissent. There is nothing men agree upon as life and duty; nothing they disagree upon so hopelessly as the science of it. All ac-

cept the Bible, but how men disagree upon the explanation of it. All accept the life and death of Jesus, but the theory of the atonement divides us into hostile camps. Theology is, of course, in every sermon, but in the best candidating sermons it is implied and not essential.

Besides, theology is cold and calculating; what men are moved by is feeling or passion. Life is nearer to us than the philosophy of it; God than our views of God.

I have in mind the case of a successful candidate who for his evening sermon took a text from the book of Jonah. But he never made a reference to the controverted questions suggested by the book, with which some have supplanted the book itself, as if a view of the Bible should supplant the Bible. One of the committee explained afterwards that they agreed that a man who could preach a sermon on Jonah and have something more important to declare than a theory of the book, was a man with the right sense of values. Jesus accepted the fact of sin and did not offer any theory of it, and He had one. He accepted the providence and love of God and gave no philosophical explana-

tion of them, but went about doing good. He did not reason about the atonement; He loved and died. Of course we have problems of metaphysics—one wisely has reasons for the hope that is in him—but it is seldom wise to belabor these problems in a candidating sermon. You are not obliged to reveal everything in two sermons—cannot. If the committee care to know your theology, they will ask you, or some one else, in reference to it.

Nor must a candidating sermon move in the region of the biblical any more than in the region of the doctrinal. It must deal, not with Old Testament history, nor with New Testament history, but with to-day's battles and to-day's hopes and fears and to-day's opportunities and duties. It must speak, not to the hearer's interest in history or biography, but to his conscience. Our hope is in the *living* God.

The candidating sermon must be a real message. It must be good news, and create hope and trust in the goodness of the order we are living in, and in the resources and powers of men's souls. It must create the impression that

life is a glorious thing and that right doing cannot fail. The Church waits to-day for men with a message—for men who believe something with enthusiasm. And how few men have any really good news to declare! There is no real sense of the higher powers, nor certain assurance that they favor us, nor certainty of a vastly superior life that they can declare. Preachers commonly do not believe in Christ with serious enthusiasm. They therefore have nothing with which they can arouse men to enthusiasm, nor with which they can impress them with the goodness and divineness of the life they declare. Yet religion is worth all besides. To give men the feeling that there are resources they do not know nor use, that there is order and plan and justice established, that another and mighty will goes forth to meet our own good endeavors, that God favors us, is to bring to men a sense of the worth of life, and faith and hope and enthusiastic endeavor. This is what men want to believe true. It would tremendously dignify their feeling toward religion, if they could believe it, and so find it in alliance with all the deepest and strongest, even

the divinest and supernatural powers of the universe. Now the man who can lead men to feel this will be loved and desired. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings."

The message of the preacher of Christ, in whatever dialect he declares it, is of the amazing goodness of God. To lay bare the disposition or feeling at the heart of the universe and to show that it is kind; to reveal the upward movement of things; to vindicate the ways of God in the face of facts that seem to point the other way; to prove the invincibleness of the will of man as over against heredity and environment; to show that truth and love and all of our ideals are as much a part of the universe as are the stars—the laws which no man can break without coming to misery and death, nor keep without knowing himself in league with all the mighty powers that sweep through the universe and have their way, and to declare these things with an enthusiasm that will laugh at obstacles and make sport of men's indifference, because his message is so good and his gift unspeakable—that is the message of the

minister of Christ in these days. A whole galaxy of new facts and forces press themselves upon us for religious interpretation, which must be laid into a foundation for the most thorough-going optimism. No language of yesterday will do for to-day, if the great interests of life which press in upon us are not to be divorced from those deep ideals which make up the heart of religion. Religion is not a museum of antiquities, but the interpretation of the facts of a living world and of an advancing life, and no one can deny that the call is loud to us, to vindicate our faith and to bring into subjection to it the great facts and interests that press upon us.

This message must come with some feeling or passion, and the preacher reveal this superior and trustful life. He is himself living the gospel he declares, and his life is good unto enthusiasm. The man himself must be the sermon. Much more depends upon what the preacher is than upon what he says, if these two can be conceived as separate. Many a sermon, great when heard, seems poor when read. The sermons of R. J. Campbell, and the ser-

mons of J. Campbell Morgan—to give two examples—lose much in print. The former's are quite disappointing as reading, and the latter's, while retaining more of their charm, to a reader would not be persuasive. The attitude of the preacher must be not merely intellectual, but vital, expressing the entire person. The lack of this is the weakness of many a sermon, and the presence of it makes the strength of almost every sermon that constrains us.

One's own personal attitude, while it should shine out in all the thought and expression, may be revealed in a more particular way. For instance, in a sermon on "The Battle," I have known a preacher to use something like the following, with effect: "No one can believe more strongly than I do in the depravity of the human heart, but I cannot believe only in that. When I look into my own heart and see what hardness and bitterness are there, how small my attainment and how feeble my patience, I cannot deny that the most that has been said of the depravity of man is true. When I see great sinners walking unashamed in the light, and wearing their iniquities as badges of

honor, and then find that these same devils are unquiet in me, how can I believe otherwise? But I cannot believe that is all. When I stand before Christ and every noble impulse within me is impatient to be free and to fight, and love puts self to a thousand sacrifices and deaths, and shame and remorse at wrong fill me, and repentance and new efforts return like great legions back to gain lost ground; when I find true ideals persisting and hope undying, and it simply not in me to love the evil and to be content with it and to choose it forever, I cannot believe that the bad is there alone. There are two of me: a demon, in whose glee I might find myself joining, and whose evil thoughts I might find myself thinking, and whose bidding I might even find myself doing; and an angel, whom I cannot get from my mind, and whom I cannot cease to love; and however I may desert him during the day, I cannot sleep until I have put myself under his banner at night. It is his that I am. I am haunted by an evil self. But when he rises up to whisper his evil suggestions into my ear, I long to feel my hands clutch his throat and to get my feet upon

his prostrate person. I do not know how he came to be there; I do not know why he should be there, but I know he must be done away, before I can be, God helping me, the man I mean to be."

This citation shows also both how the dramatic element may be introduced with effect, and how an old discredited doctrine may be shown to have, after all, a basis in experience and life.

Religion in its very essence is authoritative; the priest and the prophet by virtue of their calling are moral leaders. There is in all duty a "Thus saith the Lord." The ministry has measurably lost this. The note of authority is lacking, and with it has gone the sense of obligation. But men do respond to the constraining and compelling power of moral authority, the sublimity and reality of righteousness, the fact of a divine will in whose name the preacher speaks.

A sermon, therefore, that will make real the authority of righteousness, and will claim that authority for the pastoral calling, will strike home to the longing of the human heart and will put the foundation of God beneath that

calling. Such a sermon will tell the story of the preacher's aims and his hopes and how he despises shame—be his challenge to men to take up the cross, and thus appeal with authority to men's conscience in the name of God. This will recover to him the place the ministry has lost in men's hearts.

Both the theme of the sermon and the matter which develops it should be such as to quite universally apply. For this reason the sermon must not only keep close to experience and life, but in more detail should compass the needs of different classes and their problems, making the application of principles that might ordinarily be left to the hearer to make, or making it to some, from which others may unavoidably be inferred. One may thus reveal his insight into the problems of men's lives, and by an accurate fathoming of the depths show his sympathy for men in their struggles. He is laying bare their hearts, he is addressing their case—he knows the aspirations of the heart and its burdens. Such a man will be sure to speak home to men's needs, and make his sermons fit. He will be regarded as a practical preacher—the

kind most desired. His God will be a God near at hand and not afar off.

On the side of form, the structure should be simple and the development of thought natural, and easy to follow. The divisions should be distinctly marked, and there should be no room for doubt as to the caption the preacher is speaking under. The entire relevancy to the caption of all that is said under it, and to the general theme, should appear. Illustrations of the best class will add interest and clearness and force, but it should be remembered that illustrations are the hardest part of speech to use—nothing cheapens a sermon like cheap illustrations.

A candidate ought to say what he has to say in twenty-five minutes. One runs great risk of surrendering the interest by anything said to an already tired congregation. And while some may object to a longer sermon, none will object to one as short as this. A candidate will hardly win a favorable verdict after that time, and he may lose it; some may think him a lengthy preacher.

It is advised that the sermon be written and

that the manuscript be taken into the pulpit. The manuscript, however, should not be read. The sermon should be spoken. This indicates that you have carefully considered and written what you speak, and that you have such resources that you can disregard this formal presentation, for one more vital and forceful. Men dread what one has called "the fatal facility of words," and incline to think spoken discourse mere words, lacking preparation. To have a manuscript prevents this feeling by giving evidence of preparation. On the other hand, the merely written sermon may not be a prepared sermon; but a sermon written and then spoken gives proof that there has been the greatest care in preparation. Of course every man will follow his custom as to method of effective delivery. I want to make the point that even where a man is accustomed to write his sermons and then to speak them, it is an advantage to take the written sermon into the pulpit, and that where sermons are read it is an immense advantage to be relatively free from the manuscript.

XII

The Evening Service, Pastoral Prayer, and Scripture Lesson

CONCERNING the evening service, one feels to insist that its importance be not undervalued. For a candidate it is probably the more difficult of the two services to conduct. The inferiority of his evening ministry has lost many a man a call to which his morning service had made him reasonably entitled. The informality of the service and perhaps the anticipated smallness of the congregation seem to open the door to a light esteem on the part of the preacher, and to tempt to the use of material below the dignity and seriousness of the morning service. If anything, the evening service may be more concrete and practical, which means more difficult. But let the sermon be for the most part such as would do for the morning service.

The candidate who makes the evening service evangelistic runs a risk entirely gratuitous. There will be sure to be some who will dislike the attitude, while no one will complain if he follows not the course. Besides, the most difficult sermon to preach is the strictly evangelistic.

The other parts of the service, whether morning or evening, call for the same careful preparation. Many a man has lost the opportunity a wiser candidate has seized in the pastoral prayer, when he has in it, revealed his soul as fed by close fellowship with God, and shown how he may surely lead men in their approach to Him, which it requires great grace and skill to do. The stumbling way candidates have led congregations into this holy of holies, and the vanity of their words, have lost many a man his opportunity, and show how little he appreciates the seriousness of his calling and the greatness of the task of the candidate. If nothing else, the prayer indicates to the congregation what to expect of the sermon, and is a sort of introduction to it. If it be poor, the measure of the man has already been ad-

versely taken—the congregation come to the sermon without hope. On the other hand, the opening of the mouth here in fitness and power is assurance of the mastery of his art—the congregation come to the sermon with bounding anticipation.

Scripture that lends itself to interpretation, that is not abstract nor obscure, but concrete, and if you will, familiar and dramatic, is much better for a lesson than a selection whose chief virtue is that it fits the subject or contains the context of the words from which the sermon starts. A good reader of Scripture is so rare that one is noticed, and I have known committees to remark, in this respect, the quality of the men they heard.

The earnest candidate will see to it that during the period he seeks a pastorate he has a buoyant vitality, and goes to no appointment at a disadvantage from ill health or fatigue. He will keep a confident, cheerful temper of mind, and let no fear stampede him or sap his energy. Confidence of success is a highway to it, and as well strength for the labor. In the holding this confidence, health plays an im-

portant part. If the worst comes to pass, an apostle of Christ can be dominant in the experience, and graciously take a smaller parish, and for his joy therein be the envy of those who have climbed up and found no sure gain nor greater happiness; who have talent they did not create, but to which they must be faithful, as he must be to but what he has. The measure of life is not one's talent, but one's faithfulness to it—in whatever state one finds oneself, therein to be dominant; learning it may be how to be abased as well as how to abound, two equally great tasks.

XIII

Conclusion

ONE cannot but regret that candidating should have come to be such as may be at all fitly referred to as an art, and such endeavor and complexity be involved, where simplicity alone ought to be. The author will not conceal that he has misgivings as he sends this treatise forth, and does send it forth only because he feels that many will so recognize the incongruity of the strenuous seeking that it reveals, that they will follow not the way of the prudent, but go back with penitence to the simpler way of faith, and give up the sophistries which justify the eager effort for place. The author should like to feel that every minister of Christ who follows any accommodated way in the matter would feel a sense of disloyalty; and it may be that the very setting forth of the ways may show them to be a

departure from the ideal of the heart, which comes as the Word of the Lord and is the life of the soul, make the going therein a conviction of sin, and restrain all men of faith who believe in God and will follow the Master in the Living Way.

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